

**Using Taiwanese Literature in the High School English Classroom**

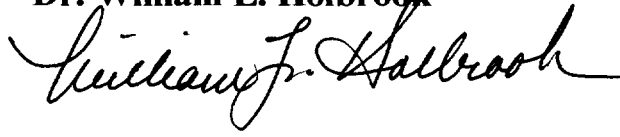
**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

**Ellen S. Rempala**

**Thesis Advisor**

**Dr. William L. Holbrook**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William L. Holbrook". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "H".

**Ball State University**

**Muncie, Indiana**

**May 2000**

**Date of graduation: May 2000**

## **Abstract**

This thesis includes two focuses. First, a case is made for the necessity of multicultural literature in the high school English classroom. Both theoretical and personal constructs are used to support the author's points. Along with this research, three story guides are provided. The story guides introduce Taiwanese literature—a type of ethnic writing overlooked within the multicultural literature realm itself. Sample writings from Taiwanese folklore, the country's modernist movement, and Asian American young adults are summarized, and a listing of possible classroom activities and questions dealing with the literature are presented. Also included are specific lesson plans and materials applying various pedagogical approaches.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Bill Holbrook, for his insightful suggestions amid the constant reminders (proclaimed in that Boston accent) that, “Rempala, it is time to get your ass in gear.” Also, thank you to my mother who instilled in me not only an appreciation and pride for my own cultural heritage, but an interest in others as well. Lastly, a word to several honors college friends—some graduated, others still at Ball State—YES, Ellen’s thesis is *finally* complete. So, all bets are (or should be) off. Glad I was able to provide some entertainment amongst you!

The United States has always been regarded as a diverse place--the "melting-pot" motif was used to describe the waves of late 19th and early 20th century immigrants settling in America. The melting-pot suggested that as the various ethnic groups started their new lives in America, their customs, native languages, and ways of life--the very things that made them unique--would give way to learning English and more "Americanized" customs. That is, their differences would "melt" away as they moved toward homogeneity. Unfortunately, the conceptual "Americanization" did not leave much room for the appreciation of cultural diversity. As this narrowing was realized, a new way of looking at American society was established.

The "tossed salad" metaphor, where each group "contributes to the national multiculture while maintaining their distinct identity," allows for pride in ethnic heritage and the recognition of the strength of cultural diversity (Tiedt & Tiedt, 3). The tossed salad metaphor portrays that each person brings to America his/her own customs, language, and perspectives on life, to be added to the existing culture . . . and *this* is part of what makes America so rich and distinguished.

Inevitably, the latter metaphor has played a role in education. Schools, being a microcosm of the greater American society, reflect current attitudes and values where popular teaching philosophies and curriculum decisions are concerned. Multiculturalism, with its tossed salad point of view, has become a powerful metaphor and realization in the educational realm. It has both its supporters and skeptics. The controversy of multicultural education lies in its complexity. As a pre-service teacher, I believe, however, that multicultural education is necessary for molding generations that will be both open-minded and successful in their professional and personal lives.

Many reasons have been given for the hesitancy in implementing multiculturalism in the schools. According to Thomas La Belle and Christopher Ward, both college administrators and

authors of *Multiculturalism and Education: Diversity and Its Impact on the Schools and Society*, “underlying multiculturalism and education debates in many societies are questions such as: Which group(s) determines and defines what counts as knowledge? Which group(s) should determine what knowledge is to be transmitted through educational institutions? Which group(s) controls access to formal education institutions and the certification they offer which is crucial to upward mobility in the job market?” (30). The question of post-secondary education in particular affects high school curriculums, as focusing on standardized test scores and getting students into post-secondary institutions often overshadows a concern for focusing on the student as a “citizen of the world.” Already in university education classes, pre-service teachers have taken sides on the debate of multicultural education. Their opinions reflect concern for the previous questions of who is defining knowledge and who controls admittance to institutions of high education.

One of my peers stated she was only going to focus on canonical texts in her English classroom--the “dead white guys,” she explained, will be what her students need to know to pass tests and be successful in college programs, thus her justification for adhering to a traditional curriculum. These concerns for standardized testing and entrance into higher institutions of learning are understandable, but they should not become the sole factors for how a teacher structures a class.

Another issue adding to the complexity of multicultural education is that no set definition for the concept exists. At first, multiculturalism focused on ethnic differences; bringing the perspective of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans to the classroom to raise awareness was important. Now, multiculturalism has broadened to include (among others) individuals with disabilities, those of different sexual orientation, religious

differences and gender issues. The “evolving concept” of multicultural education frightens many teachers away. More questions fuel the debate: Will focusing on the differences of groups or individuals, instead of the similarities, really increase acceptance? How will we decide what authors (in the multicultural literature debate) to include? Furthermore, does that mean certain “traditional” authors will not be covered? These are just some of the questions I have struggled with in my undergraduate career at Ball State University.

In trying to sort out the pedagogical issues of multiculturalism, I’ve come to the conclusion that multicultural education is of vital importance. We’ve all heard the phrase “the world is becoming a smaller place.” With advances in technology, a competitive yet interdependent global market, and continued immigration, our students will interact with individuals from various backgrounds, each bringing his/her diverse perspective and experience (whether racial, socio-economic or cultural) to the table. As educators, to *not* prepare students for these encounters is a disservice.

Setting up multicultural components in a high school classroom can be done in several ways. In an English class, the most obvious is to include literature from a sample of diverse authors. Beginning teachers, though, need to be realistic. We are deceiving ourselves if we think we can restructure a freshman English class or a senior literature course to include every significant minority writer or representative works from each ethnicity. Even in a semester-long multicultural literature course, this is impossible. Including multicultural authors into the curriculum thus becomes a personal decision, with teachers questioning (going back to the debates) “well, what authors do I add and which ones will they replace.” Making these seemingly risky decisions based on personal opinions may be too much for some teachers, which

then leads to *no* formative decision being made. The traditional curriculum stands and students are the ones being cheated.

Choosing multicultural literature to include in the English classroom, however, is not as difficult or risky as some teachers make it out to be. A young teacher wanting to implement multicultural components into the classroom needs to be cognizant of several issues. First, the English teacher needs to reflect on *why* she wants to include multicultural authors into the curriculum. My own reasons for this inclusion are manifold.

First of all, I want my students to experience what is outside their communities and country. During student teaching at Southside High School in Muncie, Indiana, I noticed the attitude of many of my students toward their hometown Muncie. I had approximately 45 of my eleventh grade American Literature students write a poem about Muncie. The basis for this assignment was from Carl Sanburg's "Chicago." While they could see the good in Muncie, many also felt trapped. The worse part was that many of them could see no way to get out; some didn't even realize they could eventually leave. My own experiences studying and traveling in Europe and the summers I spent in Taiwan have been so much fun, but I also learned a lot about myself and other people. As a teacher, I want to foster that sense of excitement in my students. In order to do this, though, students need to become aware of what is out there. The illusion of entrapment needs to be dispelled. What ways, then, can we as teachers accomplish this?

Obviously, traveling to various countries during the course of the year is not practical (but if I can ever find a way to do this . . .). Bringing the literature from various countries into the classroom, however, *is* doable. In this regard, I think English is the most suitable discipline for including multiculturalism. In the ideal study of literature, students are not just learning concrete facts; they are also witnessing characters in their various situations--peering into their

minds. Literature reflects human experiences, especially individuals' interactions and reactions (both physical and mental) within their environments. Literature reflects life. Aside from traveling, what better way to become exposed to and explore this life? This exposure, however, is just one reason why I want to include multicultural authors in my English classroom.

Supporters of multicultural education claim the inclusion of multicultural components helps students come to terms with their own cultural roots and adds to self-esteem, especially in ethnically diverse groups (Tiedt & Tiedt, 28). The students in my classroom will come from different backgrounds, each having their own set of experiences influencing who they are. Part of being a teenager is discovering "who you are," formulating an identity for yourself. As a teacher, I think assisting students in this self-discovery (without, of course, letting students know we are helping them!) is commendable. Furthermore, understanding and eventually appreciating one's cultural roots is something I value and believe to be important.

As a second generation Taiwanese American, growing up in a mid-sized town in northwest Indiana, I have dealt with these identity issues. Going to a catholic school from K-8th grade, I was one of only 3 minority students. To many people, it was not apparent that I was half Asian—I could have easily ignored this "other" side of me, but it never crossed my mind to do so. My mother made sure my siblings and I were aware of our ethnicity. We learned various Chinese words, ate Chinese food (*real* Chinese food) at least three times a week, observed Chinese holidays, and, at the young age of seven, I spent my first summer visiting the family in Taiwan.

Over the last 15 years, I have spent four summers in Taiwan; each time has been a "redefining" experience for me as far as my identity and outlook on life are concerned. If it were not for these trips, I would not have developed as strong a connection to my Asian side as I have



done. Unfortunately, literature by Taiwanese authors, by Asian-American authors in general, was not covered in grade school or high school. Even in my junior World Literature course, we only glossed over some Japanese writings and Middle Eastern works, focusing much of our time on the Greek classics. At the time, I thought nothing of it—I was able to “discover” my identity in other ways. Now, as I am about to become an English teacher myself, I wonder how many students are not connecting to the literature they read.

How many students are still just “going through the motions” of reading the assignment, completing the homework, and politely listening while the teacher praises the genius of Shakespeare or discusses the poetical conventions of Robert Frost? Worse (and sadly more probable), how many students simply do not read the assigned literature? If English teachers do not consciously make an effort to show how to connect literature to one’s life, many students will view literature *only* in the context of the English classroom—a subject to pass so one can gain that high school diploma. Fortunately, the philosophies of high school English departments are not so narrow—the application of literature to the outside world is a common, if not ubiquitous goal. Still, some students are not making that connection! As teachers we need to have students make connections with their worlds by reflecting upon those worlds through the literature and classroom experiences.

Including multicultural literature in the curriculum is one way to facilitate this reflection. The very nature of multicultural literature is a sort of two-for-one deal; while encountering the literature itself, students are also reflecting on the cultural constructs influencing the literature. This, in turn, can be used as a basis from which to study their own culture—the American culture.

Once a beginning teacher determines the reasons for including multicultural literature in her English classroom, she next needs to decide *how* that literature will be incorporated. In what format will students study the literature? What specifically are the students going to do with the literature? Various models already exist. In the elementary grades, for example, commercial multicultural unit plans have been developed. The *Around the World* series, published by Evan-Moor in 1993, focuses on particular countries; I read through the units on Japan and Nigeria. Both of these “literature-based multicultural units” include stories, art activities, games, and language activities for primary grade students.

Multicultural high school textbooks also follow a prescribed pattern. *Modern World Literature* is a 1996 state adopted textbook focusing on 20<sup>th</sup> century literature from Europe, The Americas, Africa and the Middle East, and Asia. Biographical and “literary” information is given on each author. A “Reader’s Guide”, which introduces each story, contains three sections: **background** information of the story/poem, a **writer’s response** (giving various writing activities), and a **literary focus** (defining representative literary terms). Likewise, the postreading activities follow a format that includes concrete/inferential/critical questioning, possible writing topics and language/vocabulary activities.

English teachers, however, should not feel limited to pre-existing lesson plans and activities. With this in mind, I created some activity ideas, lesson plans, and materials from literature that I collected in Taiwan and at an Asian American student conference. The literature is representative of three different time periods. Taiwanese folklore has existed for hundreds of years, passed down in the oral tradition before being committed to paper. While the stories compiled into the book *Tales from a Taiwan Kitchen* were published in 1976, the stories themselves have been part of the Taiwanese culture for many centuries. The modernist

movement in Taiwanese literature spanned from the 1960s to early 1980s. "Garbage," a short story written during that time period, represents the political and societal issues prevalent in Taiwanese culture. Finally, in the 1990s, Asian American young adults wrote the personal narratives I chose to include in this thesis. In my unit, I used these varied pieces of Taiwanese/Asian American literature so students would have a better sense of the wide range of literature by authors of Taiwanese descent.

The literature is summarized, followed by an explanation of why it would work in a high school classroom, a listing of before, during, and after reading activities, possible discussion questions, and my own lesson plan and materials for using the stories in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English classroom. As interdisciplinary teaching is becoming more popular, I also included some ideas for working with other teachers.

Each story guide is divided into six sections: the summary, relevance/use in the classroom, a listing of before, during, and after reading activities, a listing of possible discussion questions, a sample lesson plan and an “Interdisciplinary Ideas” section. A description and justification for each section follows:

*Summary:* As its name implies, this section gives an overview of the events of the story while also mentioning interspersed literary elements. It can be used as a nice, quick view of the story for teachers. The summary can also be adapted to introduce students to the readings.

*Before Reading Activities:* These activities introduce the relevant topics to students in order to get them thinking, writing and talking about them. Activating schema is the key with before reading activities.

*During Reading Activities:* These activities aid in better comprehension of the literature by supplementing the readings.

*After Reading Activities:* These activities give students a chance to “show what they know.” The after reading activities extend knowledge and allow students to apply this knowledge to other situations.

*Discussion Questions:* The questions are based on literal, critical, and inferential thinking skills. All teachers should give students frequent opportunities to practice these three types of thinking. Essay questions/Writing assignments are also included.

*Sample Lesson Plan:* In this section, application of the suggested ideas is laid out in a step-by-step, easy to follow method. The lesson plan shows how I would teach the story to my students.

*Interdisciplinary Teaching Ideas:* With present educational research and trends supporting learning across the curriculum, teachers should actively seek ways to help students make connections among the various disciplines.

## **I. SUMMARY**

**Title:** “Garbage”

**Author:** Ch’i-teng-sheng

**Publication Date:** 1982

The nineteen-page story centers on a civil engineer who travels to Tug-p’u Township in order to come up with a solution for the people’s garbage problem. The small town is already filled with garbage on the streets and in the sewers. Everywhere the man sees and smells the refuse—he realizes some extensive planning is in order. After following a garbage truck to see how the collection is handled, he becomes even more disheartened—the garbage men don’t even attempt to do their job with care, spilling waste along their route. In fact, most of the characters introduced in the story either add to the mess or are representative of the garbage itself. Political overtones, a common characteristic of Taiwanese literature, are introduced in the third section as the narrator is getting to know the town and its people a little better. River imagery is depicted in this section and the narrator meets Ch’ien-na, a nurse. Section four intensifies the garbage problem; it is becoming human-like, blowing up into the wind, overtaking the river. The narrator continually comments about how the trash will affect nature even more drastically in the future. Eventually he has a meeting with the mayor, who gives every excuse as to why the town does not need (or will not accept) the engineer’s services (no budget for it, a new administration is coming in, no one is interested in this topic). In the last scene, rain is starting to pour—the narrator takes Ch’ien-na to a bridge where they observe the river, which carried garbage away earlier that day. Irony is introduced, for just as the river carried the garbage away, it will bring it all back when the tide comes in. A sense of doom hangs over the town at the end of the story—Ch’ien-na and the unnamed narrator alone realize this.

## II. RELEVANCE AND USE OF “GARBAGE” IN THE CLASSROOM

The overarching theme in “Garbage” is that of pollution destroying the environment while man turns the other way (and, in many instances, contributes to the problem). This environmental concern is not limited to Taiwan—all countries fight a continuous battle to keep their land, water and air clean. Because polluting of the environment is a universal problem, high school students should be able to relate to and discuss the theme. In actuality, pollution and the environment is a popular theme among many high school students—it is something that affects them directly in the “here and now”; thus, interest level in the story can be easily fostered by the teacher.

If I were to use “Garbage” in my high school classroom, one major feature I would focus on is the **descriptive aspects** of its passages, namely those dealing with the piles of garbage. Besides the detailed descriptions, I would also focus on the **symbolism**. The people the narrator meet are representative of the garbage itself, particularly in their slovenly actions and physical appearances. On the contrary, the garbage becomes more human-like as the story progresses.

## III. ACTIVITIES

### Before-Reading Activities

- Read “Sarah Sylvia Cynthia Stout” to introduce students to the element of description and ease them toward a more serious work.
- To get students thinking about the relevant issues, journal writing about various topics: a “taking out the garbage” incident, a time when no one listened to what you had to say, interesting people you have met on vacations, thoughts about recycling, etc.
- Class discussion about recycling, the environment, and pollution.
- Have students work in groups of 3 or 4 to come up with a list of environmental issues in the United States today.

### **During-Reading Activities/Directions**

- The story is 19 pages of larger print; thus, students should be able to read it in a 50 minute class period or spend part of a class period reading and then finishing it for homework. Aspects of the story students should take note of:
  - garbage imagery and how the author uses it in the story
  - characteristics of the people the narrator meets
  - river imagery—what does it signify?
  - plot (of course)
- Have students keep a character or relationship chart of the different characters, including a chart for the “garbage” and how it develops over the course of the story.
- Have students keep a story chart of the different places the narrator goes.

### **After-Reading Activities**

- Have students draw sketches of each of the characters, exaggerating their “garbage-like” qualities.
- Have students write a Reader Response (1-2 paragraphs) on a particular topic in the book. Some topics include: How some people have head-in-the-sand attitudes, misinformation about progress and current environmental issues.
- Put students in groups of 3 or 4 to answer discussion questions. To extend this activity, give each group a different set of questions and after a set period of time, reconvene as a class and discuss answers.

## **IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the profession of the narrator?
2. What is the first sign he sees of the “garbage problem”?
3. What are some phrases used to describe the garbage?
4. The city’s trash cans were in what form?
5. Where does the pedicab throw his trash?
6. Name at least three sources of the garbage.
7. What plan of action does the engineer want to propose to the mayor?
8. Why does the mayor let the narrator go?
9. Approximately how big is the town?
10. What kind of image does the phrases in #3 convey? How does it affect the mood of the story?
11. What is ironic about the “DUMPING PROHIBITED, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED” sign?
12. Referring to you answer for question #5, what statement might it be making about the local government?
13. Describe some of the people the narrator comes across—the hotel clerk, the garbage men, the pedicab driver . . . what might they be symbolic of?
14. What generalizations can we make about the townspeople, including the mayor? Give examples from the story for these claims.
15. Types of conflict questions

## V. SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

**TOPIC:** “Garbage” by Ch’i-teng-sheng

**GRADE:** 9<sup>th</sup> grade

**MATERIALS:** Short story “Garbage”  
Poem “Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out”  
“Garbage” worksheet  
Discussion Questions (3 different worksheets)

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast (in writing and through discussion) descriptive techniques used in a poem and short story.
2. To develop reading comprehension, students will read the short story “Garbage” and be able to discuss the story with peers.
3. Through discussion, students will connect the theme in “Garbage” to their own community.

### LESSON OUTLINE:

#### *Day 1*

First, read the poem “Sarah Sylvia Stout” by Shel Silverstein to the class, asking them to pay particular attention to the descriptive aspects of the work. Briefly discuss. To get the students thinking about the theme of garbage/pollution ask general questions like, “Is pollution a problem in our city?” and “What do citizens do to help reduce pollution/garbage problems?”

Introduce story: set in Taiwan, main character is a civil engineer hired in to this township to help them deal with their own garbage problem, etc. Have two students read first two paragraphs (page and a half) out loud to start story.

Pass out and explain “Garbage” worksheet. Fill in the first box together. Give students the rest of the class period to read.

**HOMEWORK:** Finish reading “Garbage” and complete the worksheet.

#### *Day 2*

Check worksheets. For those students who are finished, put in groups of four to discuss their answers. For those students not finished, have them complete worksheets on their own. Ask each group to explain their answers for a part of the worksheet to the class. Keeping students in the same groups, pass out questions to be discussed/answered (use “Discussion Questions A, B, and C). *Stress to students that they should answer the questions together.* Reconvene as a class to discuss story.



## **VI. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING IDEAS**

Freshman Biology: Work together with the science teacher---have students read this story while learning about environmental issues in the science classroom.

Basic Art: Students work on the after-reading activity of character sketching/exaggeration in their freshman art class.

Geography: Students study a collection of Taiwanese (or Asian) literature while studying Asia in World Geography.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## GARBAGE CHART

*Throughout the story, the city's garbage is described in various ways. The garbage, in fact, begins to take on human characteristics as the story progresses. Find descriptive phrases throughout the story and chart them below. Be sure to include page numbers.*

Page Number	Descriptive Phrases and Types of Garbage

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP A**

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?
2. What is the profession of the narrator?
3. What is the first sign he sees of the garbage problem?
4. What is ironic about the "DUMPING PROHIBITED, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED" sign?
5. Referring to your answer for question #5, what statement might it be making about the local government?
6. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. man" and describe ways this type of conflict is portrayed throughout the story. Come up with at least three examples.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP B**

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?
2. The city's trash cans were in what form?
3. Where does the pedicab driver throw his trash?
4. What plan of action does the engineer want to propose to the mayor?
5. What reasons does the mayor give for not needing the narrator's services?
6. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. nature" and describe a way this type of conflict is portrayed throughout the story. How will this conflict become greater if nothing is done about the garbage problem?

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP C**

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?
2. Approximately how big is the town?
3. Name at least three sources of the garbage.
4. Describe the appearance and attitudes of some of the people the narrator comes across—the hotel clerk, the garbage men and the pedicab driver . . . of what might they be symbolic?
5. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. himself" and describe how it is portrayed in the story. (In other words, why is it difficult for the narrator to be who he is?)

NAME **KEY**

### GARBAGE CHART

*Throughout the story, the city's garbage is described in various ways. The garbage, in fact, begins to take on human characteristics as the story progresses. Find descriptive phrases throughout the story and chart them below. Be sure to include page numbers.*

Page Number	Descriptive Phrases and Types of Garbage
221	Dark purplish pile of something; rubbish decomposing
223	New, soft sludge dripped over the old, hardened stuff like chocolate over the top of a cookie; black muck
224	Clear plastic bags, ;leather loops
225	Looked like a net of umbrellas being flung . . . into river; pile which rose like a hill
228	Laid out like a desolate scene of ruin—colors and composition like an abstract painting; woman's shoe, beer can, disfigured doll, furniture
229	Smelly entrails of fish and fowl
232	Clumps of white foam speckled with various bits of debris
234	Pile after pile of debris like so many little pyramids
239	It will seep through doors and windows . . . come into our rooms and inundate our dining-room tables . . .buried in garbage; soak in a garbage concoction of dead animals and foul-smelling things

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP A

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?

**Answers will vary—encourage students to help each other with comprehension of the story.**

2. What is the profession of the narrator?

**Civil engineer**

3. What is the first sign he sees of the garbage problem?

**"several different kinds of rubbish" in a clump on the road toward the town**

4. What is ironic about the "DUMPING PROHIBITED, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED" sign?

**Dumping of garbage is common in the river—nothing happens to those guilty of dumping their trash**

5. Referring to your answer for question #5, what statement might it be making about the local government?

**Ineffective in handling this problem. Maybe even incapable, uncaring or ignorant.**

6. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. man" and describe ways this type of conflict is portrayed throughout the story. Come up with at least three examples.

**Narrator vs. hotel clerk—she didn't want to let him out so early in the morning, He was a newcomer—already shows how different he is from the other townspeople.**

**Narrator vs. mayor—mayor refuses narrator's services/desire to help the town. Gives all sorts of excuses, including the fact that the narrator is an "outsider."**

**Narrator vs. garbage men—the garbage men are the ones who complain to the mayor about the narrator—want to kill him before government intervenes.**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP B

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?

**Answers will vary—encourage students to help each other with comprehension of the story.**

2. The city's trash cans were in what form?

**penguins**

3. Where does the pedicab driver throw his trash?

**Into the riverbed**

4. What plan of action does the engineer want to propose to the mayor?

**He wants to build an incinerator for the town.**

5. What reasons does the mayor give for not needing the narrator's services?

**1. The mayor wanted someone from the town (vs. a stranger) to help with a solution.**

**2. A new administration is coming in next year.**

**3. Implementing the proposal would take many years—so why bother now?**

6. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. nature" and describe a way this type of conflict is portrayed throughout the story. How will this conflict become greater if nothing is done about the garbage problem?

**The most obvious portrayal of this conflict is the town vs. the river and its tides. The people, however, do not realize it—they think that by throwing the trash into the river and the river taking it away, all is good. One of these days, though, the built-up trash will prevent the river from flowing in and out of the sea and the polluted waters, when the tide comes in at night, would "spill out over the banks and inundate the town."**



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—GROUP C

1. Is there anything about the story you didn't understand?

**Answers will vary—encourage students to help each other with comprehension of the story.**

2. Approximately how big is the town?

**A thousand households—maybe around 4,000 people—smaller village town**

3. Name at least three sources of the garbage.

**Households—half a bin per day**

**Factories—paper cartons, plastic shoes, wood**

**Open-air market—vegetable leaves, rotten fruit**

**Thermal power plant—waste water**

4. Describe the appearance and attitudes of some of the people the narrator comes across—the hotel clerk, the garbage men and the pedicab driver . . . of what might they be symbolic?

**In general, they are unhealthy-looking, lethargic, cheerless and complacent. The physical embodiments of the town's attitude of refusing to resolve the waste problem.**

5. We have studied the four types of conflict. Take "man vs. himself" and describe how it is portrayed in the story. (In other words, why is it difficult for the narrator to be who he is?)

**There is a conflict within him because he is a stranger to the community, and must deal with his roles as "the outsider" and "the engineer." He is definitely regarded with suspicion by some. He knows he can help the town, and he wants to help the town, yet because of his lack of status within the community, he will not be able to help them. He is like the prophet who can see into the future, but is cursed because no one will listen to him.**

## **I. SUMMARIES**

**Title:** “Readers Digest This” A Drama in Real Life”

**Author:** Ho Chie Tsai

**Publication Date:** 1996

This first piece in a collection of four “personal statements” written by young Asian Americans focuses on a young man’s encounter with ignorance/insensitivity and his reaction to it. Hearing a store clerk refer to another Asian American customer as “Oriental” prompts Tsai to question the “abundant ignorance” surrounding him and his possible “over-sensitivity” to it.

**Title:** “A Perspective”

**Author:** Joline Robertson

**Publication Date:** 1996

Joline, who is half-Chinese and half-Caucasian, discusses how she grew up in a Midwest town where she was confident of who she was. Arriving at college, this confidence turns into a questioning of her identity. She was eventually “forced to define [herself]” through careful, personal reflection. She also writes of others’ reactions to her and the subsequent effects.

**Title:** “Crisis”

**Author:** Jessica Chen

**Publication Date:** 1996

This poem focuses rather humorously on Asian/Asian American stereotypes (or “myths” as the author says).

**Title:** “Like a Home Away From Home”

**Author:** Gordon C.C. Liao

**Publication Date:** 1996

In this poem, Gordon writes about a visit to his mother’s homeland Taiwan. While describing the elements of nature within the narration of events, Gordon offers his perspective on going on a vacation versus returning home.

## II. RELEVANCE AND USE OF PERSONAL STATEMENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

These four pieces not only deal with issues relevant to young Asian Americans; the themes are common for all youth. How many times have students overheard something that offended them or went against their beliefs and they wondered if they should speak up? What stereotypes about teenagers exist in the school and community? What stories can they tell about a family vacation? How have they dealt with issues of personal identity? While these questions may be more easily answered by minority youth, all young adults should be able to relate.

Furthermore, giving these issues a forum promotes students' development of self-awareness and character—a viable part of many schools' mission statements.

If I were to use “Readers Digest . . .,” “A Perspective,” “Crisis,” and “Like a Home Away From Home” in my high school classroom, I would present them as a packet. The works could then be read during class. My purpose for using these works is two-fold. The class would discuss the pertinent issues, but also focus on the style/conventions of writing a personal statement. A creative writing assignment would be linked to the literature. These works also lend themselves to a more thorough discussion of the Asian American image and identity. For example, two specific questions students could be asked are the following: “What are some positive and negative images of Asian Americans?” and “How does the development of identity compare/contrast between Caucasians and minority youth.

### III. ACTIVITIES

#### Before-Reading Activities

- Class discussions or journal writing about one or more of the following topics: stereotypes, finding one's identity and vacations
- Students fill out an opinionnaire about one or more of the relevant topics.
- Students start a K-W-L chart for one of the themes. (What they already know, what they want to know and—afterwards—what they have learned)
- Brainstorm about what a personal narrative might include.

#### During-Reading Activities

- Students can either be given the packet of works to be read at home or they can read them in class. Since the works are short, reading time should be minimal. During the reading, encourage students to take notes on anything they don't understand, particularly like/dislike, or want to further discuss.
- Students jot down poetical devices found in the works.
- Students write one sentence summarizing their initial reaction to each narrative/poem.

#### After-Reading Activities

- Finish the K-W-L chart.
- Redo the opinionnaire to see if anything has changed.
- Students write a Reader's Response to any of the relevant topics within the literature.
- **WRITING ASSIGNMENT:** Students create their own "personal statements." Some topics include a poem or piece about:
  - stereotypes of teenagers
  - standing up for what you believe in
  - looking at something in two different ways
  - identity

### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/TOPICS

#### "Readers Digest This: A Drama in Real Life"

1. The word "Oriental" when applied to a person of Asian descent is very offensive. Do you know why this is so?
2. What is the double entendre of the "soft white" and "yellow tint" fluorescent light bulbs? Which does the narrator choose?
3. Find an example of humor in the narrative. How does the narrator set this up?
4. Define the word "Occidental."
5. What is the narrator's reaction to the "O-word?" What are his actions?

6. The narrator realizes he is very tuned in to the “abundant ignorance” surrounding him. What does he speculate about this? (In other words, give 3 possible reasons he gives for this behavior.)
7. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?

#### “A Perspective . . .”

1. How does the author answer the question “What are you?”
2. Why does the author identify more with her Asian side than her White side?
3. When did the author really begin questioning who she was?
4. Why did race particularly become an issue during college?
5. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?

#### “Crisis”

1. “Crisis” deals with various Asian/Asian American stereotypes. Discuss/write about these stereotypes and their origins.
2. What did the poet do with her “forehead dot?”
3. What is the tone of the poem?

#### “Like a Home Away From Home”

1. Who are the two characters in this poem? What do they symbolize?
2. Compare the description of nature to the narrator’s description of his mother.
3. How does the narrator feel toward Taiwan? What does he speculate?
4. How is Taiwan viewed differently by mother and son?
5. What is the tone of the poem?

## V. SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

**TOPIC:** Short, contemporary narrative pieces by young Asian Americans adults

**GRADE:** 9<sup>th</sup> grade

**MATERIALS:** “Readers Digest this: A Drama in Real Life”  
 “A Perspective” put these four writings  
 “Crisis” together in a packet.  
 “Like a Home Away From Home”  
 Opinionnaire (2 for each student)  
 Discussion Questions  
 Writing assignment criteria

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will discuss the various conventions used in writing a personal narrative.
2. Students will write a personal narrative based on a particular issue.
3. Through reading and discussion, students will learn more about issues affecting Asian American youth.
4. Through writing and discussion, students will make connections between the experiences of the authors and themselves.
5. Examining and analyzing the writings will develop students’ critical reading skills.

### LESSON OUTLINE:

#### *Day 1*

Start the lesson by having the students fill out the opinionnaire. Once finished, discuss some of the answers.

Introduce and hand out the stories and poems. Give students time to read the two narratives and two poems. After reading, divide the class into four groups. Each group will become an “expert” on one story, further discussing and answering questions about it. Each group will be responsible for “teaching” the story to the class.

#### *Day 2*

Give students 10-15 minutes in their groups to plan how they want to lead the class discussion. Start with the “Readers Digest . . .” group—you should at least be able to get through this narrative. Start “A Perspective.”

#### *Day 3*

Finish “A Perspective” and have the “Crisis” and “Like a Home Away From Home” groups go. The aim is to have each group spend about 20 minutes on their stories. Aid class discussion as needed. At the end of the period, pass out the writing assignment criteria. The criteria will be talked about more the next day.

**HOMEWORK:** Read through the writing assignment criteria.

Write a Reader Response on which work was your favorite and why.

***Day 4***

Collect Reader Response. Have students re-answer the questions on the opinionnaire and discuss any changes in attitude/outlook. Talk about the writing assignment. For any remaining time, have students start brainstorming/pre-writing.

## **VI. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING IDEAS**

**Social Studies:** Have students work on these narratives while reading an autobiography (which is an example of a longer personal narrative) on a famous minority figure. Activities can be dually planned by the social studies and English teachers.

**Sociology/Social Studies:** Compare the Asian integration experience to that of the American Latino integration experience.

**Journalism:** Students will do interviews with Asian Americans in the community or research and write a story about an Asian Americans within their own community.



**Pre-Reading Opinionnaire**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the questions using the following scale: 1 – strongly agree, 2 – agree, 3 – neutral, 4 – disagree, 5 – strongly disagree.**

\_\_\_\_\_ The word “Oriental” is an acceptable term to use for an Asian or Asian American.

\_\_\_\_\_ Minority youth go through a greater identity crisis than their white peers do.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is okay to stereotype a group of people if what you say about them is true for the most part.

\_\_\_\_\_ By the time high school is over, you should know who you are and what you want to do with your life.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is possible for a person to be confused about his/her racial identity.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is okay for a person to be confused about his/her racial identity.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names never hurt.

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents and I have different views on many things.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to see things from others’ point of view.

\_\_\_\_\_ If you see something you don’t agree with or that goes against your beliefs, you should speak up.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the origins of the terms “model minority,” “epicanthic fold” and “kimchee.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Nature can be used to describe a person.

\_\_\_\_\_ We shouldn’t focus on people’s differences.

\_\_\_\_\_ The term “Asian American” has a clear definition.

## Post-Reading Opinionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the questions using the following scale: 1 – strongly agree, 2 – agree, 3 – neutral, 4 – disagree, 5 – strongly disagree.

\_\_\_\_\_ The word “Oriental” is an acceptable term to use for an Asian or Asian American.

\_\_\_\_\_ Minority youth go through a greater identity crisis than their white peers do.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is okay to stereotype a group of people if what you say about them is true for the most part.

\_\_\_\_\_ By the time high school is over, you should know who you are and what you want to do with your life.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is possible for a person to be confused about his/her racial identity.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is okay for a person to be confused about his/her racial identity.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names never hurt.

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents and I have different views on many things.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to see things from others’ point of view.

\_\_\_\_\_ If you see something you don’t agree with or that goes against your beliefs, you should speak up.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the origins of the terms “model minority,” “epicanthic fold” and “kimchee.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Nature can be used to describe a person.

\_\_\_\_\_ We shouldn’t focus on people’s differences.

\_\_\_\_\_ The term “Asian American” has a clear definition.

**Compare these ratings to your previous ones. Answer the following questions on the back.**

1. Have any of your ratings changed? List each one for which this is the case.
2. How did your ratings change?
3. Why do you think your opinion is now different? (Give an answer for *each* rating that is different.)

## Questions for Discussion

Name \_\_\_\_\_

- Each group is to *discuss* and answer the questions for their work. Have a recorder write the answers on a separate sheet of paper. When you are finished, read the instructions for teaching your piece to the class.

### “Readers Digest This: A Drama in Real Life”

1. The word “Oriental” when applied to a person of Asian descent is very offensive. Do you know why this is so?
2. What is the double entendre of the “soft white” and “yellow tint” fluorescent light bulbs? Which does the narrator choose?
3. Find an example of humor in the narrative. How does the narrator set this up?
4. Define the word “Occidental.”
5. What is the narrator’s reaction to the “O-word?” What are his actions?
6. The narrator realizes he is very tuned in to the “abundant ignorance” surrounding him. What does he speculate about this? (In other words, give 3 possible reasons he gives for this behavior.)
7. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?

### “A Perspective . . .”

1. How does the author answer the question “What are you?”
2. Why does the author identify more with her Asian side than her White side?
3. When did the author really begin questioning who she was?
4. Why did race particularly become an issue during college?
5. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?

### “Crisis”

1. “Crisis” deals with various Asian/Asian American stereotypes. Discuss/write about these stereotypes and their origins.
2. What did the poet do with her “forehead dot?”
3. What is the tone of the poem?

### “Like a Home Away From Home”

1. Who are the two characters in this poem? What do they symbolize?
2. Compare the description of nature to the narrator’s description of his mother.
3. How does the narrator feel toward Taiwan? What does he speculate?
4. How is Taiwan viewed differently by mother and son?
5. What is the tone of the poem?

**Instructions for teaching your work:** You will be given a 20-minute time slot to teach your peers.

You will need to plan to: Make the class aware of the summary of your story/poem

Lead the class discussion (Use your *discussion questions* for this)

Help your peers understand the theme(s) in your story/poem

Answer any questions from your peers and teacher

## Writing Assignment

The authors we have read took an event that either happened in their lives or affects their lives and put it in story or poetic form. Now it's your turn! You will be writing a personal narrative about one of the following topics:

- Family vacations which allow for reflection on personal identities
- Stereotypes or unfair treatment of teenagers/minorities
- Speaking up for what you believe in
- Identity issues

*You may choose another topic, but must get it approved by the teacher first.* Remember, this personal narrative should be written in first person and focus on *one* major event that really happened to you.

The following criteria will be used in grading your personal narrative:

Title:	2 points
Correct Length:	3 points
Grammar/Mechanics:	10 points
-Spelling -Punctuation -Capitalization -SV agreement	
Content:	20 points
	-----
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35 points</b>

Requirements for the poem: Minimum length: 50 lines

Inclusion of one poetic device (alliteration, metaphor, simile or personification, etc.)

Requirements for story: Minimum length 400-500 words, 12-point font, double spaced

## ANSWER KEY FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### “Readers Digest This: A Drama in Real Life”

1. The word “Oriental” when applied to a person of Asian descent is very offensive. Do you know why this is so?  
**Today, “oriental” is a term that is used to describe objects, not people. It is also considered offensive because it was a term imposed on Asians/Asian Americans, often implying inferiority.**
2. What is the double entendre of the “soft white” and “yellow tint” fluorescent light bulbs? Which does the narrator choose?  
**The “soft white” represents Caucasians and the “yellow tint” Asian Americans. The narrator chooses the soft white, but later thinks the yellow tint might have been better. Represents the ambivalence of the narrator.**
3. Find an example of humor in the narrative. How does the narrator set this up?  
**One example is when the author talks about how attractive the clerk is. He sets up his humorous narrative in a footnote.**
4. Define the word “Occidental.”  
**Occidental: pertaining to or characteristic of the west.**
5. What is the narrator’s reaction to the “O-word?” What are his actions?  
**It sent chills down his spine and began a series of thoughts on whether the clerk who said it knew what he was saying and what he (the narrator) should do about it. He does nothing about it, but says that maybe he will next time.**
6. The narrator realizes he is very tuned in to the “abundant ignorance” surrounding him. What does he speculate about this? (In other words, give 3 possible reasons he gives for this behavior.)  
**He speculates whether he is over-sensitive to the issues, looking for trouble, too involved with the Asian American community, or whether it is a result of his liberal education.**
7. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?  
**Answers will vary. Basically, the narrator is still ambivalent toward taking action on the issue.**

### “A Perspective . . .”

1. How does the author answer the question “What are you?”  
**She answers she is American, but her mother is Chinese and her father is White.**
2. Why does the author identify more with her Asian side than her White side?  
**It is what she knows.**
3. When did the author really begin questioning who she was?  
**Her freshman year of college**
4. Why did race particularly become an issue during college?  
**People didn’t automatically know what ethnicity she was and she was uncomfortable with their stares and questions. She was no longer sure of who she was.**
5. What are we the readers to get from the ending of the narrative?  
**The narrator has gone through her identity crisis and has come out more confident and happy about who she is.**

### **“Crisis”**

1. What is a stereotype? When does saying something about a particular group of people become a stereotype?  
**Answers will vary. A stereotype is saying something about a whole group based on a simplified conception of its members.**
2. “Crisis” deals with various Asian/Asian American stereotypes. Discuss/write about these stereotypes and their origins.  
**Forehead dot: Indian origin—Hindu symbol.**  
**Thick glasses: stereotype because many Asian/Asian Americans wear glasses and are considered smart/geeky.**  
**Kimono: Japanese article of clothing (robe).**  
**Wrappings on my feet: refers to the time period up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Asian women’s feet were bound at birth so as not to grow. Small feet were considered beautiful, but more importantly practical in wives—that way they could not run away.**  
**Eggroll, curry and kimchee: Chinese, East Indian, and Korean dishes, respectively.**  
**This line plays on the fact that “all Asian food is the same—Chinese!”**  
**Charlie Chan/Suzie Wong: stereotypical Asian characters**  
**Futon/pocket protectors/veil: various Asian products**  
**Honda: Japanese car**  
**Laundromat: When coming to America, many Asian/Asian Americans opened up laundromats.**  
**Tall American boy: implication that Asians are not tall**  
**Yellow paint: refers to skin color of Asians, or the “yellow” people**  
**Epicanthic fold: a fold of skin extending from the eyelid to the inner canthus of the eye. Common to people of Asian descent.**
3. What did the poet do with her “forehead dot?”  
**In the end, she remembers she put it in a box labeled “myths” and threw it away with everything else.**
4. What is the tone of the poem?  
**She is dealing with a very serious issue (stereotyping) but doing it in an informal and almost humorous manner. The tone is light considering the theme.**

### **“Like a Home Away From Home”**

1. Who are the two characters in this poem? What do they symbolize?  
**The mother and son (who is also the narrator). They symbolize a variety of things: old vs. young; native vs. visitor, experiences vs. novelty.**
2. Compare the description of nature to the narrator’s description of his mother.  
**The “limestone greying/ Red cracks and indentions mark the aging/ and beauty of this personable canyon” is comparable to his mother (small grey figure—he talks about her getting older, *her* “lines, indentions and cracks.”)**

3. How does the narrator feel toward Taiwan? What does he speculate?  
**He stands in wonder of Taiwan. It is beautiful; he feels a sense of possession toward the island. He “ponders” what it would have been like to live in Taiwan and appreciate the nature and meet so many different types of people.**
4. How is Taiwan viewed differently by mother and son?  
**The son sees it as his one month vacation, “my one month away from home.” For his mother, “this is her one month return,” for it *is* her home.**
5. What is the tone of the poem?  
**The tone of the poem is sentimental; it depicts two different perspectives about a place in a touching way.**

## I. SUMMARY

**Title:** *Tales From a Taiwan Kitchen*

**Author:** Cora Cheney

**Publication Date:** 1976

This book contains a collection of Taiwanese folklore. The folklore of Taiwan reflects several cultures, and the stories often center on one of the various holidays. Stories about the gods, animals, and everyday man are common. The stories in this book are fairly short; they range from 2 pages to 16 pages. The following are synopses of some of the stories:

- “How the Dragon Lost His Tale” starts the collection. This is a two-page legend about how Taiwan’s geography was formed.
- “A New Year’s Story” subscribes to the pattern of “monster torments town unless a sacrifice is annually given.” Of course, the woman whose son is to be sacrificed tries and succeeds at finding a way to outsmart the dragon, and consequently saves her son and the town.
- “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes” mirrors the story of the mouse and lion, but the main characters are a “proud pigeon” and a “humble ant.”
- “The Reward” is a short piece dealing with the theme of greed. A fisherman named Jingi is cast onto the shores of China. Near the royal palace he takes out his dried fish to eat—a commodity scarce in China and wanted by the king. A guard sees it and demands Jingi to hand it over. Jingi, suspecting there is a reward, asks to be taken to the king himself. The guard refuses until Jingi agrees to give him over half the reward. For his reward, Jingi asks for 1000 lashes—499 with a velvet rope and 501 with a leather whip.
- “How to Become a Dragon”: Dragons are a symbol of royalty, luck and prestige in Taiwan. Under the Taiwan Straits is the Dragon Gate. Dragons guard this mythical place, for if a fish



were to slip through, he would become a dragon and lessen the distinction. This tale centers on a fish who outsmarts the guardian dragon.

- “The Tiger Witch” is similar to the story of “Hansel and Gretel.” Having pictures of tigers in a Taiwanese house is not appropriate; it is considered a bad omen. The tiger witch, who eats young children, is only able to enter a house that is not protected with a baqua eye. In this tale, two sisters are left home alone and unsuspectingly allow the hungry tiger witch into their house. The story tells how they come to find out about their mistake and how they save themselves from the evil creature.
- “Wu-Feng: A True Story”: Wu-Feng is a legendary martyr in Taiwan history—he was supposedly responsible for ending the aborigine people’s practice of headhunting by sacrificing himself. This tale tell the story of how Wu-Feng became so revered by the people of Taiwan.

## **II. RELEVANCE AND USE OF TAIWANESE FOLKLORE IN THE CLASSROOM**

Students will be surprised to find that some of the folklore is similar to fairy tales and fables popular in the United States. “The Tiger Witch” parallels “Hansel and Gretel,” while “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes” is similar to the story of the mouse and lion. Other tales are unique to Taiwan; “How the Dragon Lost His Tail” explains the formation of Taiwan’s geography and “Wu-Feng” tells the story of the legendary Taiwanese hero of the same name.

Having students realize both similarities between two cultures’ writings and the uniqueness of the Taiwanese folklore is something I would focus on if using these stories in my high school classroom. I would also have the students write and illustrate their own folk tales.

## **III. ACTIVITIES**

### **Before-Reading Activities**

- Discuss common fairy tales for children in America.
- Read certain fables like “The Lion and the Mouse.”
- Introduce some legends of Taiwan.
- Discussion about oral tradition.
- Discussion about translated works and some of the consequences of translating.

### **During-Reading Activities**

- Students keep a chart about the characters, setting, and theme of the tales.
- Students come up with the “English” counterparts to the Taiwanese folk tales.

### **After-Reading Activities**

- Discussion or writing about the similarities in some of the tales to popular children’s literature in America.
- Students will write and illustrate a tale of their own.
- Students put on puppet shows or live performances of the fables for elementary grade students.

#### IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### “How the Dragon Lost His Tail”

1. What were the little dragons trying to do in the tale?
2. What geographical location is the lashed-off tail of the father dragon?
3. What is responsible for the mountain range down the middle of Taiwan?

##### “A New Year’s Story”

1. What was terrifying the town?
2. What did the town have to do once a year to appease this creature?
3. How did Mrs. Teng scare off the dragon?
4. What holiday tradition was formed from #3?

##### “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes”

1. What fable is this story similar to?
2. How did the pigeon help the ant?
3. How did the ant save the pigeon?

##### “The Reward”

1. What happened to Jingi at the beginning of the story?
2. Why does the guard try to get the fish from Jingi?
3. How does Jingi outsmart the guard?
4. What is the moral of the tale?

##### “How to Become A Dragon”

1. How does an animal get to be a dragon?
2. Why do dragons try to stop other animals from slipping through the Dragon Gate?
3. What animal attempts and succeeds at becoming a dragon?
4. What is the guardian dragon’s response to #3?

##### “The Tiger Witch”

1. To what fairy tale does “The Tiger Witch” compare?
2. Name 3 similarities between the two stories.
3. Why is the witch able to get back into the house? What is the symbolic significance of this cultural belief?
4. How do the two sisters outsmart the witch?

“Wu-Feng: A True Story”

1. Describe Wu-Feng. What does he do? What kind of person is he?
2. What was Wu-Feng trying to discourage the aborigine people from doing? Do they initially listen?
3. How does Wu-Feng finally accomplish his goal?
4. What might be the message in this story?

## V. SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

**TOPIC:** Taiwanese Folklore

**GRADE:** 9<sup>th</sup> grade

**MATERIALS:** Taiwanese Folk Tales: “How the Dragon Lost His Tail”  
 “A New Year’s Story”  
 “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes”  
 “The Reward”  
 “How to Become a Dragon”  
 “The Tiger Witch”  
 “Wu-Feng: A True Story”

Story charts  
 Books on American folk tales  
 Discussion questions (guide for teacher)  
 “The Reward” on audiotape  
 Writing assignment criteria

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will examine and discuss the various conventions used in creating a folk tale.
2. Students will compare and contrast Taiwanese folklore with American folk tales.
3. Students will write, illustrate, and present their own folk tale.
4. In a workshop setting, students will critique their own and others’ writings.

### LESSON OUTLINE:

#### *Day 1*

Start by having a discussion about folk tales—Which ones are the students familiar with? Which ones are popular today? What are their origins? How were they passed down? I would even have some folk tales handy so students could spend time browsing through the written versions of the stories and point out characteristics. Once discussion about the origin of folk tales is complete, introduce the Taiwanese folklore. Together, read “How the Dragon Lost His Tale” and discuss.

#### *Day 2*

Hand out the rest of the stories and the story chart. Explain that students will be given the rest of the hour to read the literature and work on the charts. Read “A New Year’s Story” together. Have them silently read “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes.” Have “The Reward” on audiotape. While having them fill out the chart as they go along, also use the discussion questions to make sure students understand plot.

**HOMEWORK:** Finish reading “How to Become a Dragon,” “The Tiger Witch,” and “Wu-Feng: A True Story.”

***Day 3***

Use the discussion questions over “How to Become a Dragon,” “The Tiger Witch,” and “Wu-Feng: A True Story” as pop quiz questions. Discuss the remaining stories. Focus particularly on the style of writing and comparisons to American stories (fables, folk tales, and fairy tales) If there is time, introduce the writing assignment. Brainstorm ideas as a class—write answers on the board.

***Day 4***

This probably won’t be the fourth *consecutive* day, but give the students a day in class to work on their stories—set up a workshop atmosphere, placing students in different areas depending on how far they are with their stories.

***Days 5 and 6***

(Again, probably not consecutive with Day 4) Students present their stories to the class.

***Day 7***

Arrange for students to go to the elementary school and read their stories to the children.

## **VI. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING IDEAS**

Art: Have students work on drawings for their projects in art class.

Geography: To compliment “How the Dragon Lost His Tale,” have students research stories about how some countries came to physically be the way they are.

## ANSWER KEY FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### “How the Dragon Lost His Tail”

1. What were the little dragons trying to do in the tale?  
**They were trying to wake their father.**
2. What geographical location is the lashed-off tail of the father dragon?  
**It became the island of Taiwan.**
3. What is responsible for the mountain range down the middle of Taiwan?  
**The mountain range was created by one of the little dragons caught underneath the lashed-off tail.**

### “A New Year’s Story”

1. What was terrifying the town?  
**The ghost of a dragon killed at sea.**
2. What did the town have to do once a year to appease this creature?  
**The town had to sacrifice a first-born son for the hungry dragon.**
3. How did Mrs. Teng scare off the dragon?  
**Mrs. Teng was told in a dream that dragons are scared of blood and loud noises. Thus, she covered her door with her own blood and burnt bamboo, which made a “tremendous racket.”**
4. What holiday tradition was formed from #3?  
**During the New Year’s celebration in Taiwan, blood red papers are put on the doors and firecrackers are set off by all as day begins.**

### “Good Neighbors Come in All Sizes”

1. What fable is this story similar to?  
**“The Lion and the Mouse”**
2. How did the pigeon help the ant?  
**As the ant was drowning in a stream, the pigeon threw him a leaf and saved his life.**
3. How did the ant save the pigeon?  
**The ant, upon seeing a hunter aim his gun at the sleeping pigeon, jumped onto the hunter and dug his stinger into the man’s ear.**

### “The Reward”

1. What happened to Jingi at the beginning of the story?  
**He became lost in a storm at sea and ended up at a port on Mainland China.**
2. Why does the guard try to get the fish from Jingi?  
**The people have not had dried fish for months, and the king declared he would not speak until he gets some. There might also be a reward to the person who brings the fish to the king.**
3. How does Jingi outsmart the guard?



Jingi agrees to give the guard over half of his reward if the guard takes him to the king. When asked what he would like his reward to be, Jingi replies, "A thousand lashes with a whip . . . the first 499 with a velvet ribbon and the last 501 with a leather whip."

4. What is the moral of the tale?

**Greed does not pay (or something to that effect).**

#### "How to Become A Dragon"

1. How does an animal get to be a dragon?

**The animal must pass through an underwater gate in the Taiwan Straits to become a dragon.**

2. Why do dragons try to stop other animals from slipping through the Dragon Gate?

**"If all the fish become dragons, then what is the distinction in being a dragon?"**

3. What animal attempts and succeeds at becoming a dragon?

**A little carp**

4. What is the guardian dragon's response to #3?

**He said he wanted the carp to be a dragon all along due to his ambition, persistence and wit. He wanted to let him through.**

#### "The Tiger Witch"

1. To what fairy tale does "The Tiger Witch" compare?

**"Hansel and Gretel"**

2. Name 3 similarities between the two stories.

**Involves a pair of siblings, the witch has a house of candy, the witch eats children, the children outsmart the witch in the end.**

3. Why is the witch able to get back into the house? What is the symbolic significance of this cultural belief?

**The protective "baqua eye" is not replaced on the doorpost. The eye watches out for evil/watches over the house.**

4. How do the two sisters outsmart the witch?

**Caught up in a tree, the girls agree to let the witch eat them, but as they are "dirty from running around," they ask for some peanut oil so they can clean up and "taste better."**

**They boil the oil and say they will jump into the witch's mouth. Instead, they pour the hot oil down the witch's throat, and she withers into a stack of wet banyan leaves.**

#### "Wu-Feng: A True Story"

1. Describe Wu-Feng. What does he do? What kind of person is he?

**He is the Director of a district in Taiwan. He is bright, noble, educated, well liked and respected by all.**

2. What was Wu-Feng trying to discourage the aborigine people from doing? Do they initially listen?

**He was trying to stop the practice of headhunting. He gets the chief to agree to use heads already in storage, but as time goes by the young warriors want to go back to the custom of headhunting.**

3. How does Wu-Feng finally accomplish his goal?

**He gets the young warriors to agree that instead of a random farmer or towns person, they will kill the man who Wu-Feng chooses. He tells them to kill the man who in three days will be walking down a certain road, wearing a red cloak and hood. The warriors agree and kill the man. When the hood is removed, they are horrified to see it is Wu-Feng they have slain. They stop headhunting.**

4. What might be the message in this story?

**Answers will vary. It could have something to do with self-sacrifice or being honored and respected by people.**

)

)

)

TITLE	CHARACTERS	PLOT	MORAL/MESSAGE	CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

## **FOLK STORY GUIDELINES**

You will be writing and illustrating your own folk story based on ideas we brainstormed in class.

Keep in mind that your story will most likely be read to elementary school students, so keep the content appropriate! Remember the following requirements when planning your story:

**PLOT:** The plot should be fairly simple, as the story will only be around 250 words.

**CHARACTERS:** You should have a minimum of 2 characters. Create some **dialogue** to make it interesting.

**CULTURAL ELEMENT:** Ask yourself: What aspect about American culture am I explaining or portraying? You must be able to answer this!

**MY TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_